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ABSTRACT

Analysis of current literature indicates that the process and the outcome of social studies education in rural communities is little different from that in the rest of the country. Despite the excitement surrounding the "Foxfire" program in rural Georgia and the efforts of curriculum innovators, students in rural America are likely to encounter a rather ordinary social studies program. Curriculum materials deemed relevant to the lives of students are scarce in rural classrooms, and few teachers take advantage of community resources or develop their own materials. Studies show that rural youth learn citizenship and social studies knowledge, skills, and attitudes to about the same extent as the majority of their non-rural counterparts. Although rural schools as a class are well within the educational mainstream of the nation, some rural schools offer inferior or superior opportunities for learning. The quality of research done on rural social studies has varied widely, possibly because of the lack of financial support available for research in rural education. Large scale research projects such as the National Science Foundation studies need to be continued and should be used as models for replication in local rural communities. References are included for the 33 studies reviewed in this paper. (JHZ)

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Social Studies and Citizenship Education In Rural America: Process and Product

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Social Studies and Citizenship Education

In Rural America: Process and Product

Over the past 15 years a small body of literature concerned with the process and product of social studies and citizenship education in rural America has emerged. The purpose of this paper will be to review that literature. Implications of the literature for the preparation and development of rural social studies teachers will then be discussed.

Research in rural social studies education has been advanced by major investigations into the status of social studies that have included rural schools. The National Science Foundation (NSF) sponsored three such studies in the late 1970's. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has reported on the outcomes of citizenship and social studies education all sizes and types of community, including rural, since 1970.

For this review I have divided the literature into two major categories--one encompassing studies on the process of social studies education in rural schools, the other consisting of studies on the outcomes of social studies instruction in rural schools. It is assumed that

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citizenship education is one of the principal missions of social studies educators, although it is not their exclusive domain.

Social Studies Education in Rural Schools

In searching for literature on the process of social studies education in rural America, I found several studies reporting on materials and methods used in rural social studies classes. In addition to reviewing them, I will summarize the findings of four national studies as they pertain to social studies education. This will allow the reader to reflect on the question, "How divergent is rural social studies from the mainstream of schooling in the U.S.A.?" Finally, I will share the results of a small survey that suggests that rural parents may support a less traditional social studies curriculum than that provided in their schools.

Materials and Methods in Rural Social Studies Classes

Only a handful of studies on the nature of social studies education in rural schools exists. Fortunately, they include some major investigations that were national in scope. According to this limited research, rural students are not likely to encounter social studies programs that are reflective of either social science or life in rural America.

Jefferson (1977) surveyed 80 social studies teachers in 40 public high schools which were randomly selected from 23

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of South Carolina's 46 counties to determine the extent to which seven national social studies curriculum projects were being used. About 50 percent of the teachers had used the specified curriculum materials as models for materials they developed. Thirty-one teachers used the project materials as sources in classroom instruction. Small non-urban schools were less likely to have the materials than large urban schools. Similarly, in a survey of 217 school corporations (districts) in Indiana, Pahl (1978) found that the size of the student body and the urbanness of the school corporation were the two strongest predictors of innovative social studies textbooks and the use of innovative educational practices.

A National Science Foundation study of science, mathematics, and social studies education (Weiss, 1978) included 268 rural schools. Forty-two percent of them were reported as using at least one of the federally-funded curriculum materials in science, mathematics, or social science that were developed during the 1960's and early 1970's. That compared with 29 percent of urban schools and 54 percent of suburban schools. In those rural schools, 24 percent of the social studies classes were using textbooks with copyright dates prior to 1971 while 26 percent of classes in urban schools and 28 percent of classes in suburban schools were using social studies texts published earlier than 1971. Of the rural teachers of grades 7-9

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surveyed, 21 percent had attended one or more NSF institutes in science, mathematics, or social science education. Twenty-three percent of the rural teachers of grades 10-12 had attended at least one of the institutes. Among the tenth through twelfth grade teachers in the study, significantly fewer rural teachers had participated in NSF institutes than teachers from small cities, suburbs, and cities of 50,000 people or more.

How relevant are the social studies curriculum materials used in rural clssrooms? Morris and Garcia (1982) queried 76 secondary social studies teachers and 737 students in rural communities of 2,500 people or fewer. Respondents were in 14 schools in the states of Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, Missouri, North Dakota, and Texas. They found that both teachers and students perceived a need for curriculum materials that adequately depict rural America. They also determined that many of the teachers did not create materials to fill the void and were unaware of sources of social studies materials relevant to rural life. They provided a list of such sources at the conclusion of their article. McCain and Nelson (1981) have offered numerous suggestions for locating and using rural community resources for teaching social studies.

Weible (1983-84) cited Eliot Wigginton's Foxfire program in rural Georgia as an example of integrating community resources into the curriculum and described nine

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additional community-related learning activities for rural students. Mehaffy (1984) credited Wigginton with popularizing the idea of student-produced oral history magazines. He reported that over 200 such projects were underway as of 1980. How many of them occurred in rural schools was not indicated. Mehaffy offered advice to assist teachers in planning to undertake an oral history magazine with students and recommended use of the concept in the following words:

> The promise of oral history is enormously powerful: here is a procedure which will actively involve students in their own learning as they study their communities, their families, and themselves. (pp. 13-14)

Peters (1984b) has advocated the inclusion of global perspectives in rural social studies curriculums. He argued that residence in a rural community does not insulate people from the effects of global events nor eliminate the need for rural students to prepare themselves for global citizenship. He identified several resources that are usually available to develop the global perspectives of rural students: encyclopedias, novels, history books, travel publications, newspapers, and films from lending libraries. He recommended use of role playing, simulation, and field trips. He produced a teacher's guide (Peters, 1984c) for using the nuclear arms control issue as a means of developing the global perspectives of rural youngsters.

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Peters (1984a) also has recommended the incorporation of environmental education into k-12 global studies curriculums for rural students. He said this should be done through integration and fusion of environmental education and global studies with social studies. He stated that global studies tend to involve vicarious experiences of natural and social phenomena, whereas environmental education offers direct experiences of human interaction with natural and social environments.

There have been efforts to develop curriculum materials relevant to particular rural students. Ruopp (1977) investigated the results of a social studies curriculum reform project initiated in 1968 by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and terminated nearly three years ahead of schedule. The project spent over $500,000 in just over two years. Four to five years later, the teacher guides were not being used and only minimal use was being made of the student activity materials. Ruopp reviewed the history of the project, using records, reports, correspondence, and conversations with key BIA officials and steering committee members. He found that two opposing viewpoints had contended with one another during the life of the project: One that saw the project as a needed reform to replace old texts and methods with new techniques and insights from the social sciences and another that saw the emerging curriculum as inappropriate for Indian students and their teachers.

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Ruopp called the project a model of curriculum reform as a social movement responsive to the demands of professionals. He recommended an alternative model--curriculum reform as a social experiment--for future projects.

During the 1976-77 school year, Stake and Easley (1978a, 1978b, 1978c) directed a National Science Foundation study of science teaching and learning in American public schools, Case Studies in Science Education (CSSE). Eleven high schools and their feeder schools were selected for field observations. The schools were chosen to represent the nation in terms of region, socioeconomic status, race, and degree of educational innovativeness. Two of the schools, BRT and Pine City (both pseudonyms), were rural. Social studies education, in addition to science and mathematics, was included in the BRT case study, but not in the Pine City study. A summary of the BRT case study (Stake and Easley, 1978b) will be given here.

BRT was a consolidated school district in rural Illinois. In 1976-77 the high school had 136 students in four grades. The football team won its second consecutive conference championship. Honors had also come to the school for the quality of science papers and science projects entered in competition. BRT had a declining birth rate and further school consolidation appeared imminent.

BRT high school had only one science teacher, one mathematics teacher, and one social studies teacher. The

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social studies teacher, "Mrs. F.," taught five periods per day and had four different preparations. "Mrs. F." was in her ninth year of teaching at BRT, having returned to teaching following a 10-year period of tending to her home, her husband, and three sons. English was her major subject and she had not taught social studies, her minor, for the previous five years.

"Mrs. F." subscribed to Reader's Digest and People magazines and two newspapers. She complained of being too busy to do the things she wanted to do during the school year. She spent her evening time watching situation comedies and crime programs on TV. Once a month she participated in a circle group of the Methodist Church. The essence of her educational thought, as captured by the field observer Alan Peshkin, may be found in the following statements:

> I think we all have to keep to the basics. So far as I'm concerned, it's essential that students have some general knowledge about their background. Thus, history, you see. But I don't believe in committing to memory dates and places, things that we cannot show are relevant. If they can catch the general idea of what the country was like in a particular period . . . It's enough if they can say this is the way things were and these are some of the reasons for it. Then they should be able to relate those things. What I'm trying to do is bring the past up to the present, I guess. It's a matter of seeing relationships because facts aren't anything by themselves.

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> Too often they learn something for the moment with no carryover to it. I suppose this is part of what I mean when I say, 'See the relationships,' seeing something relevant to tomorrow's assignment and what we had two weeks ago. There's a thread. It's almost like the plot of a novel running through all this. Yet, so many of them, what they learn is for a test. (p. 4-41)

> Right now students are only required to take U.S. history in the social studies area. We're so downed by schedules it would be idealistic to think there's room for another required course in this area. But if I could require one course, it'd be sociology. If it's well taught, if it's well received, some of the biggest problems are there--crime, war, delinquency, the social problems. And a study of those social problems might timulate some of these people into social service. And to me that's where it's at. I know there's always been problems, but I'm a confounded optimist. (p. 4-42)

"Mrs. F.'s" methods included lectures, discussions, research papers, mock elections, films, interviews, written homework assignments, textbook reading assignments, and oral reading. The students seemed to have seen some value in the American history class taught by "Mrs. F.," but were not especially enthusiastic about it and the level of student participation was less than ideal. One student observed:

> In class, we read what we're supposed to, at least occasionally. Nobody does too much in history because most think it's boring. You go through the same routine. When the teacher asks how many read the lesson, only one or two raise their hands. (p. 4-49)

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Junior high and elementary school social studies teachers in BRT also were included in the field observations for the case study. The observer noted that the general view of BRT's youth held by their teachers seemed to be that they were limited in background and narrow in outlook.

Rural Social Studies and Social Studies in the United States

It is difficult to separate social studies in BRT from social studies in the other schools of Case Studies in Science Education. Stake and Easley (1978a) summarized the CSSE finding on the social studies curriculum in American schools as follows:

> The social studies curriculum was primarily about history and government, and to some extent, about current social problems and about understanding oneself. It was rarely about social science, the systematic inquiry into social phenomena. There was little agreement on what subject matter content had to be covered in a social studies course and one saw little articulation across these courses. Where we did find coordination, we also found less concern about contemporary social affairs. (p. 19:4)

Text-bound teaching predominated science, mathematics, and social studies in the CSSE schools. In social studies

> the most common scene was . . . of the teacher asking questions about the reading assignment, often requiring verbatim responses, stressing the value of good information from reliable sources, particularly the textbook. (p. 19:7)

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Stake and Easley found that the CSSE teachers shared a preemptive aim, that of socialization. They observed,

> Each teacher had a somewhat different set of purposes, but a common and vigorously defended purpose was that of socialization. It impressed upon the student an observance of the mores of the community, submitting personal inclinations to the needs of the community, conforming to the roles of 'good student,' and getting ready for the next rung on the educational ladder. Of course there were great differences in the ways teachers stressed and interpreted socialization. (p. 19:4)

As it is difficult to distinguish social studies in rural BRT from that of the non-rural CSSE schools, so it is problematical to isolate rural social studies education from the portrait of social studies in the United States produced by the National Science Foundation in the late 1970's. Shaver, Davis, and Helburn (1980) reviewed three major NSF studies of precollege science education as they pertained to social studies. The studies were a 1977 national survey of administrators and teachers (Weiss, 1978), a review of the research literature in social studies/social science education from 1955 to 1975 (Wiley, 1977), and the Case Studies in Science Education (Stake and Easley, 1978a, 1978b, 1978c). The conclusions of Shaver, Davis, and Helburn included the following:

1. The role of teachers is central to the social studies curriculum and individual teachers have much to say about what social studies is.

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2. Students are not likely to have interaction with federally-funded (especially NSF-funded) curriculum materials.
3. The textbook is the central tool of social studies instruction and the most commonly used texts are traditional ones.
4. The social studies curriculum seems to be about history, government, and geography, with slight attention to current social problems.
5. The objectives of instruction are mostly information objectives which are achieved through lecture and discussion, the most frequently reported teaching techniques, and demonstrated by reproducing the language of the textbook in recitations and on tests.
6. Motivation is largely external--based on grades, approval, conformity, and college preparation.
7. Both social studies and science have lost instructional time in the primary grades because of the "back-to-basics" movement.
8. Social studies classes are similar to those of 20 years earlier.

The foregoing seems to be descriptive of social studies in rural schools. There are, to be sure, exceptional rural schools where social studies classes use materials and

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methods designed to promote inquiry into past, present, and future social issues and to develop social science concepts. Such shcools, however, are unusual in any type of community.

Goodlad (1983) found the deck stacked against innovation and change in American schools. Commenting on his in-depth study of 1,016 classrooms, he said,

> One would expect the teaching of social studies and science in schools to provide ample opportunities for the development of reasoning: deriving concepts from related events, testing in a new situation hypotheses derived from examining other circumstances, drawing conclusions from an array of data, and so on. Teachers listed those skills and more as intenced learnings. We observed little of the activities that their lists implied, and teachers' tests reflected quite different priorities--mainly the recall of information. The topics that come to mind as representing the natural and social sciences appear to be of great human interest. But on the way to the classroom they are apparently transformed and homogenized into something of limited appeal. (p. 468)

Attitudes of Rural Parents

Weible and Evans (1983) conducted a voluntary survey of parents of fifth and sixth graders in a rural Midwestern community. The non-random sample of 48 parents responded to 21 items, each reflecting a standard found in the revised curriculum guidelines of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 1979). Weible and Evans found strong support for the National Council guidelines, including agreement that social studies programs should promote

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greater student involvement and include relevant controversial topics and issues. They concluded that "parent support in rural communities for the traditional approach to the social studies may not be as great as many educators believe." (p. 30)

Summary of the Literature on the Process of Social Studies Education

Despite the excitement surrounding Foxfire and the efforts of curriculum innovators, rural Americans are likely to encounter a rather ordinary social studies program. Textbooks and teaching methods are apt to stress information rather than critical thinking and inquiry skills. Curriculum materials deemed relevant to the lives of students are scarce in rural classrooms, but social studies teachers there tend to overlook opportunities to use available resources or to develop their own materials. Analysis of the literature to date indicates that the process of social studies education in rural communities is little different from that in the rest of the country.

The Social Studies and Citizenship Achievement of Rural Youth

Since the process of social studies education in rural schools is not noticeably different from that in the remainder of American schools, one would not expect the social studies and citizenship outcomes to differ greatly. Assessments of the social studies and citizenship

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attainments of young Americans have provided no substantiation of the notion of general rural educational inferiority.

National Assessments of Citizenship/Social Studies

Much of what is known about the social studies and citizenship achievement of rural Americans is found in the results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress. National Assessment is a project to gather census-like data on the educational attainments of young Americans in four age groups: 9-year-olds, 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds, and young adults ages 26 through 35. The first NAEP assessments of citizenship and social studies were conducted in 1969-70 and 1971-72, respectively. In 1975-76 the second assessment of both learning areas was done. NAEP gathered the most recent citizenship/social studies data in 1981-82.

Henderson (1973) reviewed the results of the earliest assessments and sought implications for rural education. He made the following observations:

> If one is to judge by the results of the NAEP assessment exercises, the rural school is doing a seriously inadequate job in giving students formal information about the nature and goals of government at all levels. It is extremely doubtful that an individual of any age will take an interest or active part in carrying out his civic duties if he does not know what his civic duties are. This lack of information can only lead to an ever widening gulf between rural citizens and their representatives in local, state, and national government. (pp. 24-25)

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My own analysis (Easton, 1977), however, led to a different view. I examined the results of the first National Assessment of social studies and found that, although the rural sample performed slightly below the national performance level, the social studies attainments of rural 13-year-olds were fairly typical of those of their counterparts in the rest of the country.

Martin (1979) reviewed the results of National Assessment to develop a perspective on student achievement in rural schools. The baseline data--data that summarized student performance on all the exercises in the learning area and the differences in performance between each reporting group and the nation--showed that urban, not rural, students were the farthest behind the performance levels for the nation in citizenship and social studies. In fact, rural 13-year-olds and 17-year-olds were essentially at the mean performance levels for the nation in the 1975-76 citizenship/social studies assessment and rural 9-year-olds were two to three percentage points below the mean. However, students from urban and suburban communities with high proportions of professional and managerial residents were four to seven percentage points above the mean.

National Assessment (1983) reported 1981-82 citizenship/social studies results by size and type of community. Young Americans from "extreme rural" communities performed slightly below the national levels in all age

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groups on all of the citizenship/social studies objectives. By comparison, youths in "disadvantaged-urban" communities, where a relatively high proportion of people were on welfare or were not regularly employed, fell significantly below the national performance levels on all objectives while those in "advantaged-urban" communities, where a relatively high proportion of residents were in professional or managerial positions, did significantly better than the national performance levels on all objectives.

Assessments of Specific Rural Populations

Burke and Edington (1980) stated that rural schools are most often characterized in educational literature in terms of what they lack--adequate staff, equipment, money, supportive services, diverse curriculum, qualified teachers and administrators, and achievement test scores. They indicated that this view of rural schools can be misleading due to the heterogeneity of the rural population in the United States and pointed out the contrast between achievement results for various rural ethnic subgroups and the National Assessment findings that include all rural youth. It would be improper, therefore, to assume that NAEP rural results are representative of any specific locality.

Several local assessments have been reported in the past 10 years on the social studies or citizenship achievement of specific rural populations. They illustrate the heterogeneity of rural America.

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Rather (1975) assessed the performance of 13-year-old seventh graders in rural public schools in north Mississippi with 36 NAEP citizenship exercises. Although he found the north Mississippi sample surpassed the 1969-70 NAEP extreme rural sample on 12 of the exercises, he concluded that the north Mississippi youths were deficient in many areas of civic development, especially civic attitudes. He noted that his sample lagged behind the national rural sample in knowledge of the structure and functions of government.

In another north Mississippi study, Billingsley (1976) appraised the social studies achievement of 13-year-olds in public schools. He used 58 exercises from the 1971-72 National Assessment with a sample of 390 students in 20 schools. He found that the north Mississippi youngsters generally performed below the NAEP extreme rural sample.

Davidson (1977) constructed three assessment instruments using NAEP social studies exercises from the 1971-72 assessment. All students in grades 4-12 at a rural public school in North Dakota were tested at the beginning of the 1976-77 school year. He determined that overall performance of the students was "essentially equal to national and regional norms, slightly higher than rural norms" (pp. 89-90). The performance of nine and 17-year-olds was significantly higher than that of the 1971-72 NAEP extreme rural sample.

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Rabon (1981) inventoried the social studies attainments of 13-year-olds in rural public and private schools of northeast South Carolina. He administered 58 released exercises from the 1971-72 National Assessment to a sample of 324 students in 17 schools. He observed that the South Carolina sample performed less well than the national rural sample of 1971-72.

Lawlor (1980) examined six public high schools within 85 miles of Muncie, Indiana, and found that the geographical location of the school was not a significant variable affecting social studies skill achievement. The skills assessed with an author-produced test were: acquiring information through reading, drawing inferences, cartoon interpretation, reading tabular data, graph interpretation, identifying time relationships, reading a ballot, classifying information, recognizing a point of view, validity of sources, and recognition of cause-effect relationships. Rural students in the study had difficulty in acquiring information through reading and recognizing a point of view. Their best performance was in drawing inferences. Students in metropolitan, suburban, and rural schools showed an inability to use a general election ballot, to recognize cause-effect relationships, and to identify time relationships.

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Summary of the Literature on Achievement

In general, children and youths in rural American communities learn citizenship/social studies knowledge, skills, and attitudes to about the same extent as the majority of their non-rural counterparts. Certainly, youngsters in some rural communities learn more than those in others. Although rural schools as a class are well within the educational mainstream of the nation, some rural schools offer inferior or superior opportunities for learning.

Rural Social Studies and Citizenship Research

Rural America is heterogeneous. Our rural schools exist independent of one another. Studies of individual rural schools or of schools in particular rural areas show variance from national rural findings in social studies and citizenship. The quality of research done on rural social studies has varied widely. This may reflect, in part, differences in the levels of financial support available for reserach in rural education.

Large-scale research projects such as the NSF studies, the National Assessment, and Goodlad's study of schooling need to be continued. They should be used as models for replication in local rural communities. If a purpose of studying schools, classrooms, and student achievement is to improve education, more studies of social studies and citizenship in single rural schools should be conducted with

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comparable national results used as benchmarks against which to evaluate local efforts. Those benchmarks, however, must not be accepted blindly as standards of excellence.

Implications for Rural Teacher Preparation

Perhaps one reason that the process and product of social studies and citizenship education in rural America are in the mainstream of American education is that the preparation of rural teachers has seldom been any different from that of other teachers. In recent years a number of teacher education colleges and universities have attempted to change that (Nelson, 1983; Gardener and Edington, 1982).

Preparers of rural social studies teachers might consider the expectations placed upon rural teachers. Massey (1983) has pointed out that rural elementary teachers work across grade levels while secondary teachers work across content areas. She said that rural teachers are expected to enhance the close relationship between school and community and to accept the sense of ownership by school board members and other citizens. Rural teachers, according to Massey, may be expected to fill many of the socializing needs of the community and must be able to cope with isolation, loneliness, and lack of privacy.

The Standards for the Preparation of Social Studies Teachers (NCSS, 1984) should be consulted to determine how programs might be designed to meet both the needs of rural communities and the criteria of the National Council

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for the Social Studies. The standards deal with general education, professional education, and education in history and the social sciences. It seems that each of these components could be designed with the advancement of both rural education and social studies education in mind.

Teacher educators who prepare social studies teachers can begin to address the needs of those who teach social studies and citizenship in rural America by answering the following questions:

1. Is a typical education in social studies and citizenship adequate?
2. What would constitute a superior social studies/citizenship program for rural Americans?
3. What would be some appropriate designs for rural social studies teacher preparation programs?
4. How should teacher educators relate to rural teachers, schools, and communities?

The development of competent citizens who will discharge their responsibilities to themselves and to society is a major aim of education. Social studies educaton has a vital role to play in the realization of that aim. Therefore, it is incumbent upon educational leaders to determine the extent to which social studies programs--

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curriculum materials and teachers--are accomplishing desired ends and to improve them when they are found lacking. In this process, the needs of rural Americans should be fully considered.

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